

*Goldens Bridge, NY* – U.S. Rep. John Hall (NY-19) met today with Carol Sheridan and Mike Surdej at their Goldens Bridge home to talk about how the landmark health insurance reform legislation will benefit them. Congressman Hall's visit was part of his regular "Congress in Your Kitchen" events that allow constituents to talk with him at length in an informal matter about issues that directly affect their lives.

Mike Surdej was diagnosed with colon cancer nine years ago, at the age of 47. He required radiation, chemotherapy, and surgery. During this time the couple had health insurance, so Mr. Surdej could focus primarily on getting better. He is healthy now, but still receiving post operative care. Carol Sheridan works as a nurse and has so far been able to obtain good health care insurance for her family through her employer. However, about a year after his battle with cancer began, Mr. Surdej lost his disability insurance.

Congressman Hall explained to the couple that under the new health insurance reform law, the family would not have to worry that if Ms. Sheridan changed jobs, a new health insurance provider would be likely to treat Mr. Surdej's bout with cancer as a pre-existing condition, and thus refuse coverage. "People such as Mike and Carol, when their facing a major illness, should not also have to worry about whether they'll lose their health insurance," Hall said. "As a result of the new law, they won't have to," he said.

"I'm grateful that, because of my wife's insurance, I was allowed to focus on fighting my disease and keeping my family strong, instead of worrying about how I could ever hope to pay my medical bills," Mike Surdej said. "Every family should have the same opportunity, and they shouldn't have to worry about what will happen if they change jobs in the midst of it all."

"We regard the passage of major health insurance reform as a personal victory," Carol Sheridan said. "It's an important first step."

Ms. Sheridan and Mr. Surdej also have two children – one in high school and one in college. Hall explained that as a result of the new law, they will be able to stay on their parents' insurance coverage until age 26. "We been concerned about what would happen to their health insurance once they left college," Carol Sheridan said. "This is a great relief to us."